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ABSTRACT

The Allen County Team for Individualized Occupational Needs (ACTION) Project is a cooperative career education project developed by three rural Kansas school districts and their communities. The participating high schools have enrollments of 500, 400, and 200 students. The ACTION Project is designed to provide quality career education through a shared approach which eliminates duplication of expensive staff, curriculum, and equipment. Three portable trailers (each a specially equipped classroom laboratory for either industrial and technical, business, or service career education) rotate among the districts; the laboratory instructor for each component moves with the classroom. Each student spends one-third of the course in each of the career areas. In addition to the one-hour-per-day class, directed at students at all high school levels, ACTION merges the career education concept with existing curriculum in other courses through teacher workshops. Four advisory committees include teachers, students, business and industry representatives, and a citizen council. Community resources are used both through talks to classes by local citizens and student field trips and interviews. In its second year (1973-74), ACTION has received positive community and student evaluation. (RS)

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A CAREER EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

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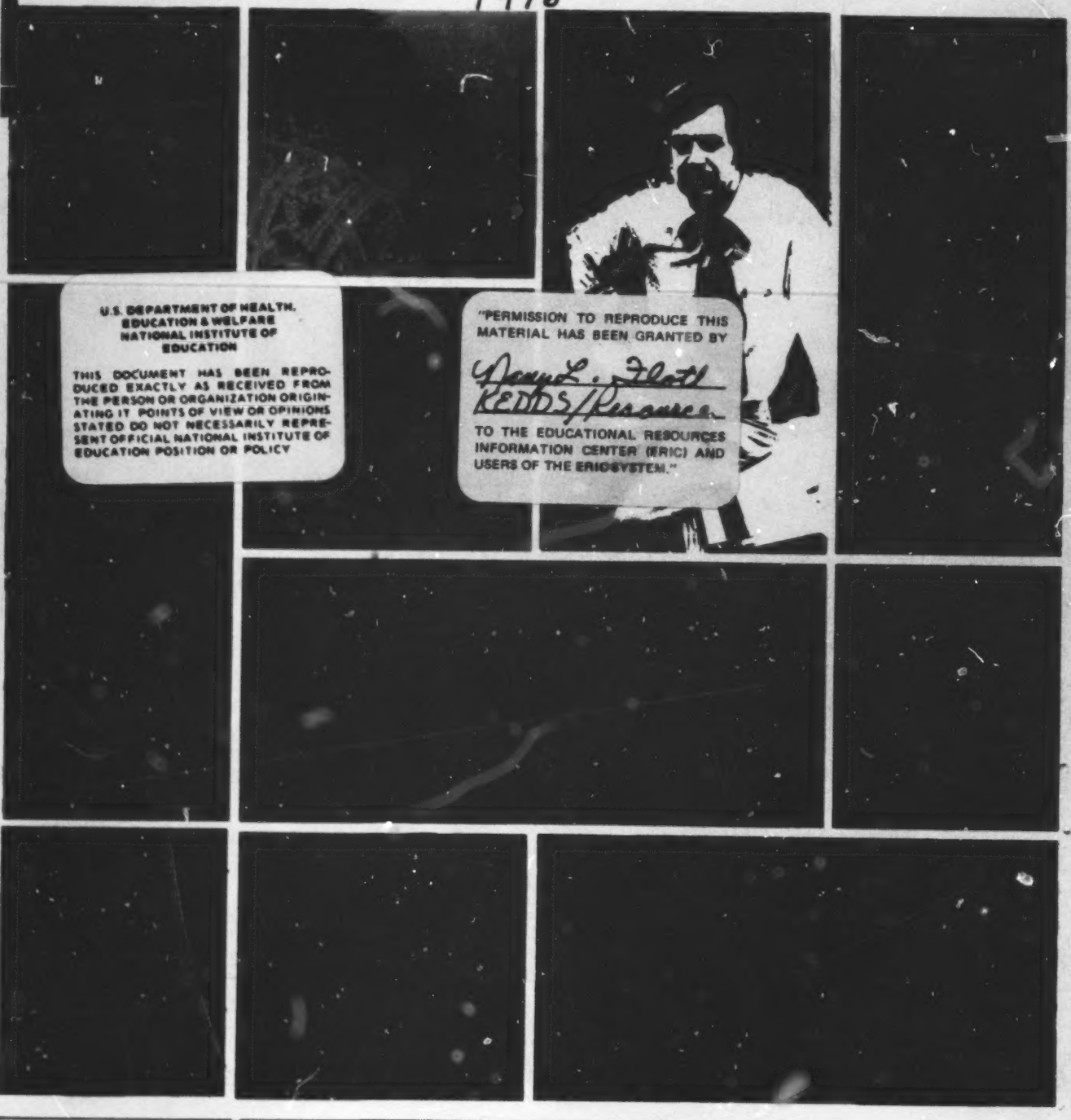

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INTRODUCTION

ACTION is short for Allen County Team for Individualized Occupational Needs and is an innovative educational project that focuses on career education. The ACTION Project is jointly sponsored by the Kansas Title III (ESEA) Office and three Allen County School districts. The Allen County school districts involved are Humboldt (USD 258), Iola (USD 257), and Moran and Elsmore (Marmaton Valley USD 256).

The ACTION Project is most innovative in its cooperative and imaginative approach to the delivery of high quality career education. The cooperative approach allows all three rural school districts to benefit from a common program and a common staff. Career education, the three school districts, the curriculum, the delivery system and the progress to date, are described in the pages to follow.

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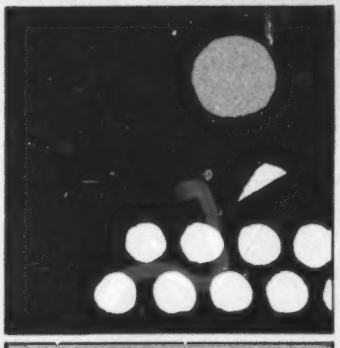

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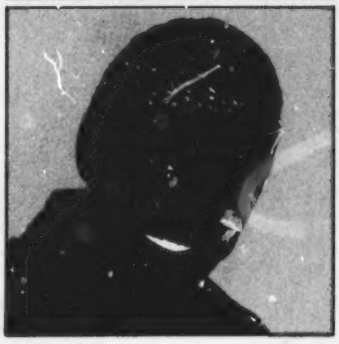

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CAREER EDUCATION

RELEVANCE is a word often used in discussing the concept of career education. Most of us recognize that if education is truly to be a preparation for adult living, then it must be concerned with, and relevant to, what students will be doing as adults. Students need to be exposed to, and to spend some time considering what they may be doing as adults.

"What are my interests? What are my capabilities? What are my alternatives?" These are legitimate, and relevant questions for students as they make and pursue their own career choices. Relevance, then, does describe the activities that go on in the career education process. Career education makes the student aware of the adult world. It allows the student to prepare himself or herself to meet adult living needs and goals.

Relevance describes career education in yet another aspect. Much of the material used in career education simulates the problems students encounter and will encounter outside the classroom. Adults use mathematics to figure bills, measure rooms and material, plan a budget, assess the adequacy of an inventory, design a home, figure taxes, and a multitude of other things. The career education concept encourages learning of mathematical skills by using actual problems, such as those listed above, in the classroom. The student is then more likely to appreciate the relevance of mathematics to life and is likely to work harder to master this academic area. The same learning principle applies in the academic areas of grammar, history, social studies, home economics and others. Classroom learning can be made more relevant and career education is an effort to make it so.

Career education, as a concept, also includes an attempt to reduce the practical and social distance between the school and the community. To do this, career education programs utilize the community as an extension of the classroom (field trips and placements). They likewise bring members of the community into the classroom as speakers and advisors to lend perspective to the educational process.

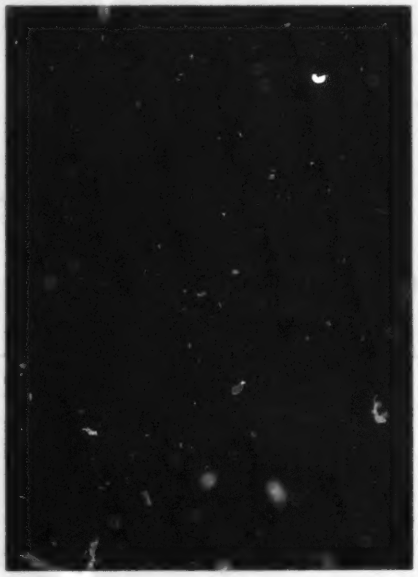
Career education is confused by some with vocational education, but they are not the same! Career education is a much broader concept and whereas vocational education fits well into the concept and process of career education, it covers only a small part. Career education

has to do with all aspects of adult and career awareness, exploration, familiarity, and preparation, while vocational education usually refers to the more limited concept and process of skill training.

Career education encompasses both the college bound and the non-college bound student. But the focus is on the individual's adult and career goals rather than on college preparation as such. It encompasses preparation for living in a family or for single living. It is truly a broad and relevant concept for education today.

The career education concept maintains that students, when they approach the adult world, should be able to understand and be ready. The process arms them with the basics for making important life decisions. It provides them with a relevant, early opportunity for exploration and evaluation of a number of career alternatives.

2 THE RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS



IOLA

HUMBOLDT

ELSMORE

MORAN

ALLEN COUNTY, with a population of approximately 15,000, is located in southeast Kansas near the Missouri state line. It is approximately midway between Wichita (110 miles) to the west and Joplin (80 miles) to the east and also approximately midway between Kansas City (90 miles) to the north and Tulsa (120 miles) to the south. The economy of this rural Kansas county is heavily agricultural, with cattle and feedgrain as the primary products. Retail business, services and industrial and commercial enterprises are concentrated in the county's more populous communities. Allen County is concerned with providing its young people with a relevant and practical high school education.

The county seat and largest community in the county, IOLA (population 6,600), also has the county's largest school district (USD 257 with approximately 2,000 public school students). Besides its role as an agricultural service area, Iola has several manufacturing plants, a busy retail area, and a full contingent of utilities and public services. The high school has an enrollment of approximately 500 with a sizable proportion of its students bussed in from the outlying areas.

HUMBOLDT is a community of approximately 2,500 population and the Humboldt School District (USD 258) has approximately 800 students in the public school system. There are almost 400 students in the high school. There are a number of smaller industries in Humboldt, a large cement plant, a relatively active retail area, and a full range of utilities and public services.

The MARMATON VALLEY school district (USD 256) encompasses the smaller communities of MORAN and ELSMORE. This school district has more than 500 students in its public education system and more than 200 in the high school. Moran has a population of over 600 and Elsmore has a population of approximately 100. Moran is primarily an agricultural service area but has a few small industries, a small retail area, and the utilities and services are provided on a smaller scale.

3 THE PROJECT

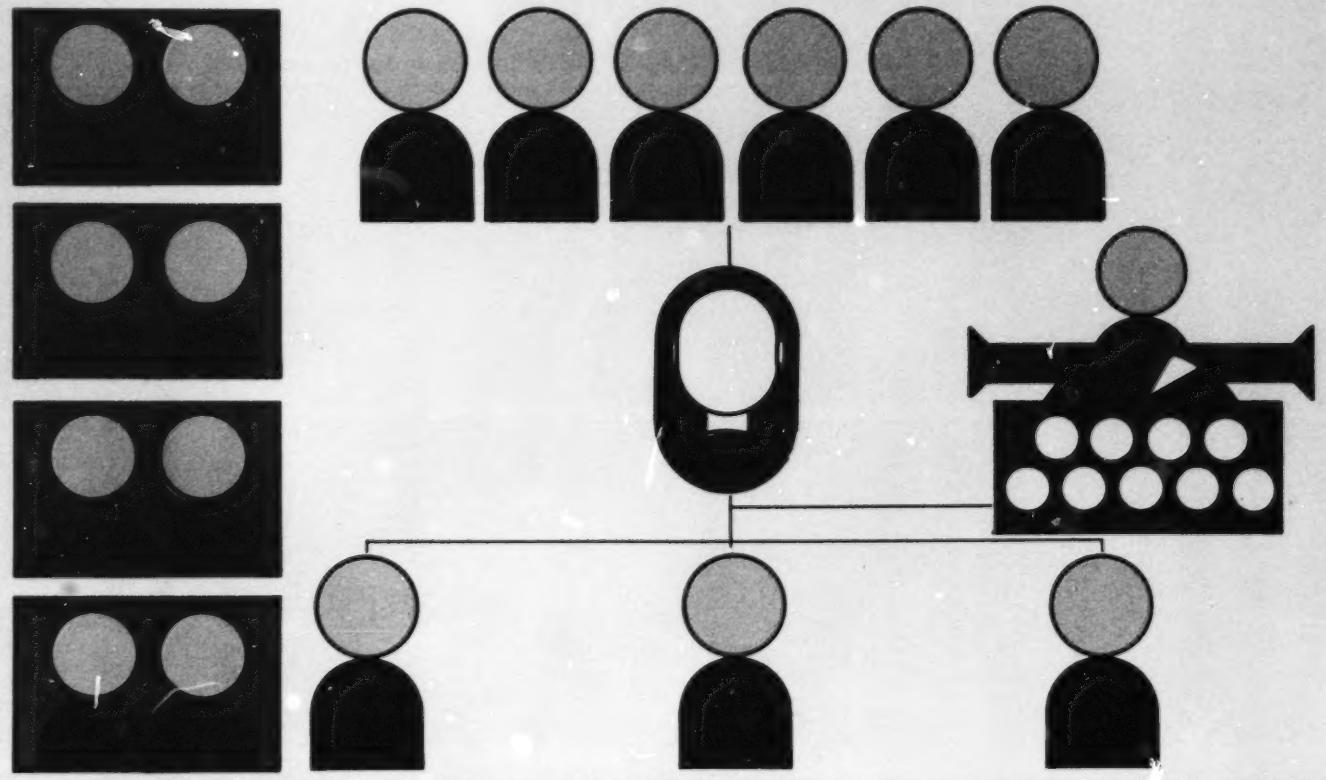
The ACTION Project is a cooperative endeavor between the three school districts in Allen County and the people of Allen County. The formal organization of the ACTION Project was developed to reflect this spirit of cooperation. The overall administration of the project is the job of the Executive Committee, which is made up of the superintendents of each of the three cooperating school districts and the principals of each of the three cooperating high schools.

The Project Director reports directly to the Executive Committee.

The Project Director, in turn, has a staff of four – three laboratory instructors and a secretary, who reports to the Project Director and who serves the entire project staff.

The community and the non-administrative personnel of the school system are represented in the form of four separate and active advisory committees: (1) the Teachers Advisory Committee, (2) the Students Advisory Committee, (3) the Business and Industry Council, and (4) the Parents and Citizens Advisory Council.

Because career education reaches out into the community, reaches into all parts of the curriculum, and touches on all students and their parents; a broad based cooperative and participative organization is a necessity for a successful career education effort.



4 THE CURRICULUM

At the core of the ACTION career education project is a single course that accommodates students at all high school levels. The course is a one hour per day course held in special, well equipped laboratory classrooms. One classroom is equipped with tools, machines, materials and curriculum for industry and technical type careers; one classroom is equipped with tools, machines, materials, and curriculum for business type careers; and the third classroom is equipped with the tools, machines, materials and curriculum for service type careers. The special career education courses conducted in the special classroom laboratories are taught by educational specialists who are both well trained and familiar with their individual career areas. During the school year each student spends one-third of the course in each of the career areas. In this way, the student is exposed to all types of careers.

Much of the curriculum for each of the three career areas is prepackaged in commercially available form, and can be used with only minor modifications. But each educational specialist also develops much of his or her own curriculum. The availability and use of a wide variety of slides, films, filmstrips, and a video-tape recorder add to the presentation and development of the curriculum.

Although this core career education component is based in these specially designed and equipped classrooms, the activities of the classes extend into the local communities in such forms as visits and interviews with local industry personnel, retail merchants, public service agencies such as police and fire, and with many other representatives of the world of work and adult living. Also, individuals and groups from the community visit the classrooms and talk with students individually or in groups. Likewise, interested community representatives inspect and comment on curriculum and educational components with which they are familiar.

Beyond the special classroom and laboratory course, the career education emphasis and effort is merged with existing curriculum in all other classrooms. Teachers are exposed to career education concepts in special workshops and they develop practical objectives for introducing career education concepts into their ongoing classroom efforts. They are also encouraged to use community resources in ways similar to those used by the laboratory instructors.

Students, too, are involved in designing the curriculum, and their participation gives the career education effort its well-rounded perspective.

The effort, aimed at exposing students to a full range of career options, and utilizing real world problems and materials and coupled with the employment of existing community resources; is accompanied by training in how to find and apply for a job, how to handle a job interview, and many other skills associated with the world of work and adult living.

Action addresses the full scope of career education.

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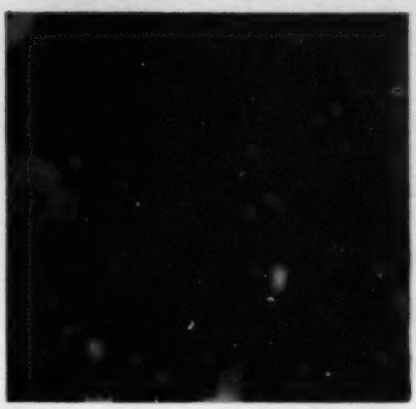
5 THE APPROACH

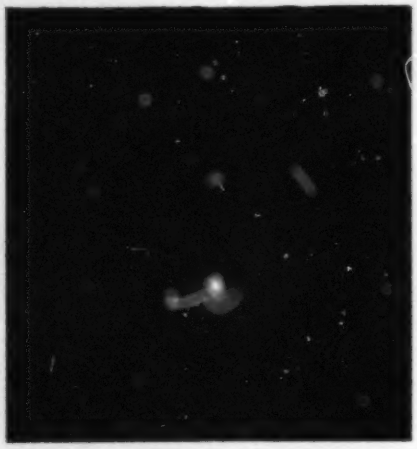
A most unique aspect of the ACTION Project is an innovative idea for avoiding duplication of expensive staff, curriculum, equipment, tools and teaching aids among the cooperating school districts. The three specially equipped classrooms or laboratories are portable trailers. The trailers are rotated from one high school to the next during each school year. And the educational specialist (laboratory instructor) moves with his or her classroom. While one school district is offering the segment on industrial and technical career education, another is offering the business segment and the third is offering the service careers component. When these components are completed, a contractor readies the portable classrooms and moves them from one school to the next. It's quick and clean, and it can be done without missing a step in the class schedule.

Aside from the obvious economics of shared, mobile facilities; exposing the educational specialists to the various Allen County communities and exposing the communities to each of those career education components and specialists has its own benefits. This bilateral exposure provides the career education project with a broader base from which to draw community resources and it provides healthy interaction between the schools and school districts.



6 THE PROGRESS

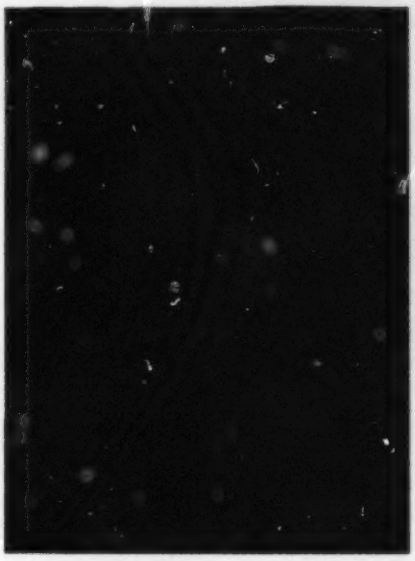
Although the ACTION Project is only in its second year (1973–74), an early evaluation of the project is very encouraging. Teachers in the school districts have reacted favorably to summer institutes that provide in-service training for career education efforts. Likewise, they are gaining proficiency with developing career education objectives, although progress in this area is not as high as was hoped.



"Traditional classroom work has not provided the high school student with a clear view of the real work and the real requirements of the business world. The concept of career education takes care of that. As I understand the Action Program ... I think it's great."

Jack Hixon
Hixon Office Equipment
Iola, Kansas

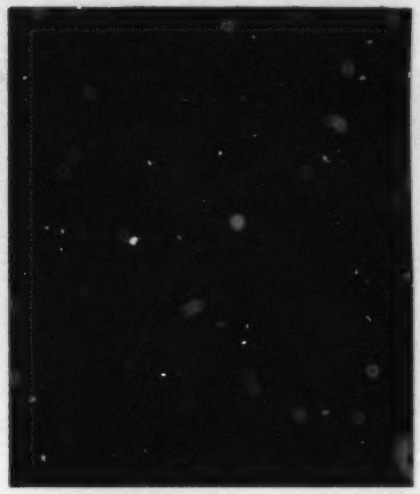
Appropriate course materials (Career Packets) have been developed by many teachers and the project staff has developed numerous training aids. The career education hardware is in place and being used and the system for placing, utilizing, and moving the portable laboratories works well.



"I think it's working! It's certainly doing the job we set out for it. It's filling a void for the students, it's involving the community in school activities. We are trying now to have career education from K thru 12."

William Muckenthaler,
Superintendent
Marmaton Valley

Early measures on the students who are participating in the laboratory courses do indicate that students are completing the work, and that desired levels of proficiency are being reached or exceeded following each component of the laboratory course. Early measures also indicate that the project is received positively by the community as well as by the students.



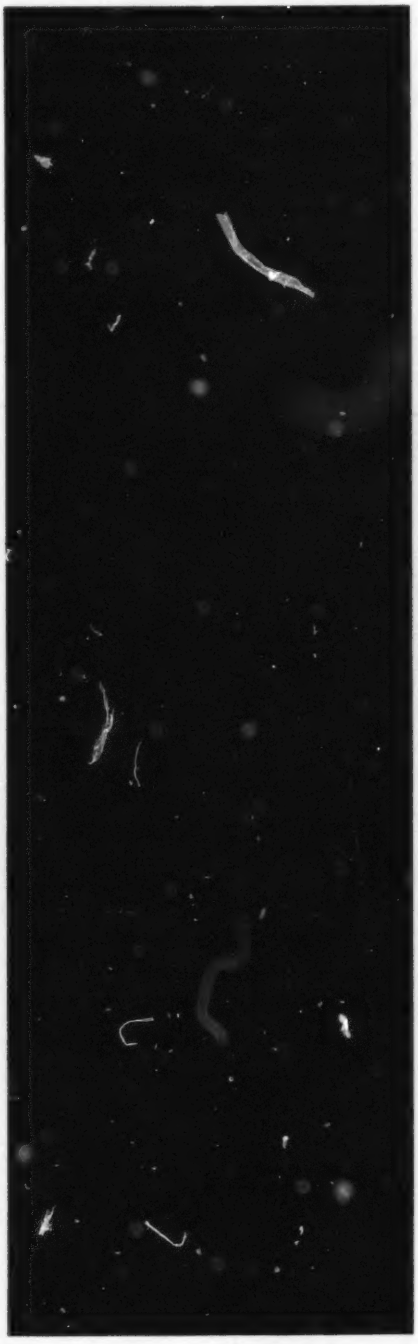
"I think it helps. There are a lot of different things about occupations that I now know and that I didn't know before."

John McIntyre, Senior
Humboldt

"Now I can take the courses in high school that have to do with those careers in which I'm interested."

Bonnie Stroh, Freshman
Humboldt

7 STARTING YOUR OWN



If you're interested in developing your own career education project and if you feel that the ACTION Project provides a useful model, then we would be pleased to supply you with additional material and assistance.

We have several documents and dissemination pieces that we can make available upon request. Included in available material is: (1) the original application for Title III (ESEA) funding; (2) the second year re-application document; (3) the project objectives, evaluation reports, and audit reports; (4) specific curriculum outlines used in the career education laboratories; (5) examples of objectives and curriculum modifications developed by teachers and students; (6) a policy handbook developed for our career education project; (7) a slide-tape presentation about the project; (8) flyers that outline the project; and (9) detailed pieces that answer more specific questions. We will be glad to correspond, visit on the telephone, have you visit our project or, when possible, supply an experienced career education consultant from our project. Let us help!

Write: Harold Norris, Director
ACTION Project
Marmaton Valley School District
Moran, Kansas 66755

Or Call: (316) 237–4358

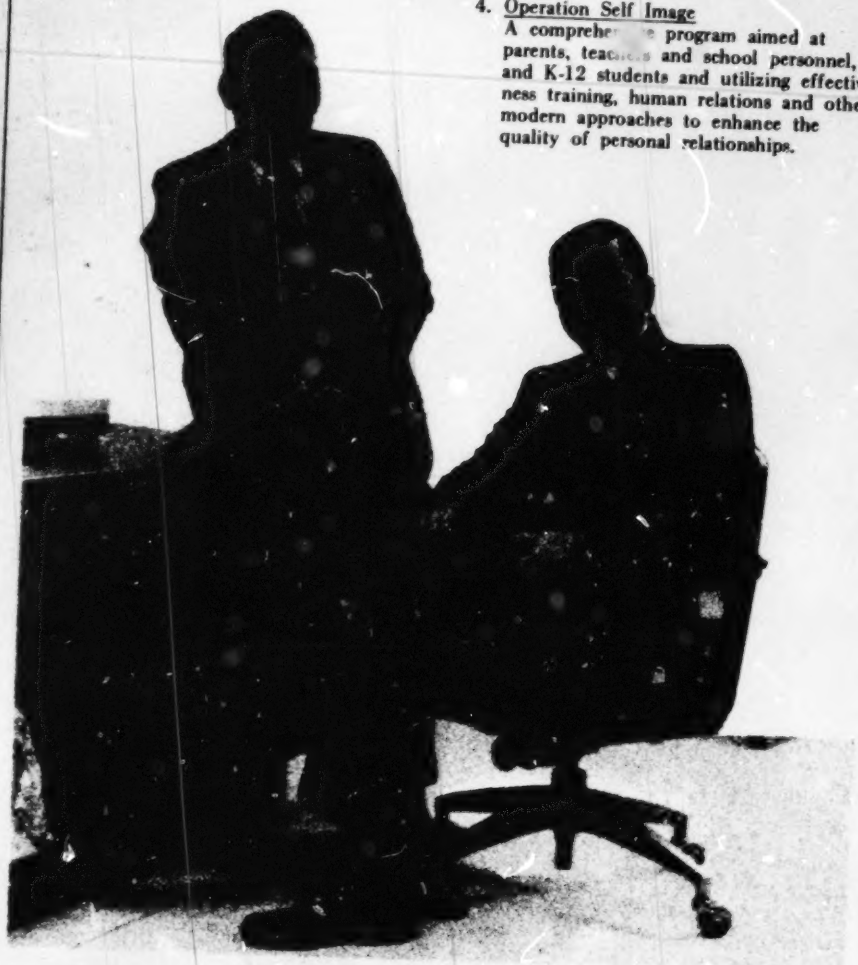
8 OTHER KANSAS PROJECTS

1. Pre-School Reading Exposure Program (PREP) A program of regular visitations to the houses of pre-schoolers for reading purposes and utilizing paraprofessionals.

2. Supporting Rural Special Education Services A program in rural western Kansas that utilizes a van as a mobile special education classroom and training center for rural school districts.

3. Positive Self Image and Social Involvement A program aimed at elementary school children and utilizing social involvement techniques (role playing, simulation, etc.) to counteract low self esteem.

4. Operation Self Image A comprehensive program aimed at parents, teachers and school personnel, and K-12 students and utilizing effectiveness training, human relations and other modern approaches to enhance the quality of personal relationships.



5. Secondary Exploration of Technology (SET) An experimental career awareness and career preparation program for secondary students and utilizing community and industrial consultants.

6. Humanities Involvement for the Culturally Deprived A project aimed at influencing curriculum towards more of a balance in regards to cultures and particularly more minority culture materials and orientation.

7. High Performance Program Based on the Wechsler Preschool and Primary Test of Intelligence, high performance pupils are selected at the kindergarten level. The high performance pupils then receive individualized performance oriented instruction.

8. Special Education Teacher Aide Project Trains and manages aides in a program aimed at better meeting the needs of special education students. College classroom and OJT training with supportive consultants.

9. Individualized Instruction in Family Living Program has a teacher training component, a modified curriculum (K-12), and provides unipacs for students, counselors, parents, teachers, etc.; all utilizing information for solving problems of students.

10. Diversified Educational Experiences Program (DEEP) A model for open classroom at secondary level with emphasis on non-traditional tools and approaches (audio-visuals, etc.). Has models for classroom management, teacher training, and evaluation.

11. Environmental Education Demonstration Project Aimed at elementary and secondary levels and involving community, industrial, and environmental protection leaders. Project uses both classroom components and field trips to sensitize and teach about the balance of nature.

12. Cooperative Learning Through Environmental Activities in Nature (CLEAN) K-12 program utilizing ecologically oriented teaching modules which can be incorporated in regular or special classroom or field trip programs.

PROJECT STAFF FOR ACTION
TITLE III (ESEA) PROJECT

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ACTION